

First Lady Christie Vilsack Iowa Stories
Kindergarten Book 2004

Sweet Corn and Sushi
The Story of Iowa and Yamanashi

By Lori Erickson
Illustrated by Will Thomson
Japanese Translation by Shinji Yoda and Yasuo Ohdera

Beginning in 2002, First Lady Christie Vilsack's literacy foundation, Iowa Stories 2000, gave a book to every kindergarten student in Iowa. The first year, the children received **I is for Iowa** by Mary Ann Gensieke and Lonna Nachtigal. Last year's book was **Bells Goes to the Fair** by Susan Knapp and John Whitehurst. This year's book is **Sweet Corn and Sushi**, written and illustrated by Iowans Lori Erickson and Will Thomson. The story highlights a part of Iowa history that began a friendship between the people of Iowa and Yamanashi, Japan. Kindergarten teachers will receive this book in April to present to their students in May.

The is a story to be read aloud to kindergartners by parents, older children, grandparents and shared within the family. Before teachers send the book home, they may want to encourage upper elementary book buddies to read the book with their kindergarten friends.

Teachers may want to use the book to reinforce concepts already covered during the school year. Themes like friendship, helping others, diversity, and sharing are touched on in this story. This book provides opportunities to introduce or remember social studies concepts like living in a time and place, growing crops, and celebrating special occasions.

With all three books, Mrs.Vilsack has partnered with departments of state government to offer enrichment activities for teachers and students to enjoy. Once again, this book will include a map and hands-on activities to supplement the themes of the story. **This year's partners include:** The Iowa Historical Society, The Department of Cultural Affairs, The State Library of Iowa, AEAs and the Early Childhood Network, The Department of Health, and Sister States of Iowa.

Sweet Corn and Sushi

THE STORY OF IOWA AND YAMANASHI



海の向こうの特別な友だち
アイオワと山梨の物語

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Timeline:

March 1, 2004	Announcement flyers delivered to Kindergarten Teachers and Principals
April 21-30	Books & Bookbags delivered to Elementary Buildings
May 5	First Lady, Kick-Off Press Conference
May 5-30	Teachers distribute books to Kindergarten Children



Classroom Resources and Partners
For
Sweet Corn and Sushi; The Story of Iowa and Yamanashi

First Lady, Christie Vilsack: <http://www.christievilsack.org/>

Department of Cultural Affairs:
<http://www.culturalaffairs.org/>

The State Library of Iowa: <http://www.silo.lib.ia.us>

The Iowa Historical Society: <http://www.iowahistory.org/>

Iowa Department of Education <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/>
<http://www.state.ia.us/educate/governor/index.html>

Department of Public Health - HAWK-I
http://www.idph.state.ia.us/coveringkids/coverage_hawki.asp

Department of Economic Development; Sister States of Iowa
<http://www.iowasisterstates.org/>

FROM THE AUTHOR, Lori Erickson

I grew up on a farm in northeast Iowa (and yes, we raised pigs!). As a freelance writer for nearly 20 years, I have written many times about Iowa and its people, but **Sweet Corn & Sushi** has been a uniquely rewarding project.

The idea for the book came when I visited Yamanashi in 1999 as part of a delegation organized by Iowa Sister States. While there I heard the intriguing story of the Iowa Hog Lift of 1960, when 35 hogs were given to Yamanashi to help their livestock industry recover after two devastating typhoons. I was immediately struck by the whimsy and power of the story. It was so Iowan and so reflective of the best spirit of the state. I recognized the Iowans in the story, generous and practical people willing to open their hearts to help others in need.

Once I returned to Iowa, I wrote the text of the book in fairly short order. The hard part was finding an artist to illustrate the story and a publisher that wanted to print it. After a year I found an illustrator, Will Thomson, who created some preliminary drawings. Later I wrote several grants that helped fund more development of the book. There were many disappointments along the way, but what kept me going all along was the unshakable belief that this is too good a story to be forgotten. Iowa First Lady Christie Vilsack's decision to make the book part of her "**Iowa Stories**" literacy program has been tremendously exciting. Thanks to her efforts, the story of the unique friendship between Iowa and Yamanashi will reach far more people than I had ever dreamed possible.

I hope readers will take several messages from the book. Perhaps the most important is that one person has the power to make a difference in the world. I love the way Richard Thomas wanted to help strangers who were in trouble half a world away, and then found a way to involve other people in the Hog Lift project. I also like how the story shows that friendships are possible even when there are great differences between people.

When I went to Yamanashi I was very touched by how many people treasure their sister-state relationship with Iowa. I remember especially the three nights I spent with a family who spoke very little English, while I spoke about ten words of Japanese. But two members of the family had ridden in **RAGBRAI** and toured Iowa, and they greeted me like I was part of their family.

There's an expression that says; "When pigs fly..." (meaning that it's very unlikely that something will happen). In 1960, something unlikely did happen: a friendship was formed between two very different lands. I am happy to celebrate that friendship in **Sweet Corn & Sushi**.

FROM THE Illustrator: Will Thomson

When Ms. Erickson, the author, came to see me one day in 2001, she wanted to ask me if I would help her by illustrating "Sweet Corn & Sushi". Although I have done many different kinds of illustrating assignments before I had never been asked to design and illustrate a children's book, especially one in two languages and I thought it would be a very pleasant, but challenging, job.

One of the more difficult parts of it for me was drawing pictures about another culture; people in different parts of the world have different traditions, interests, styles of behavior, and customs that I knew I must pay attention to in my drawing. An innocent gesture or image might seem rude or have the wrong meaning in another country. I have never traveled in Japan, so I had to study, and I also asked Japanese acquaintances to come and look at my drawings as I prepared them, in order to get all the details right.

Each picture was the result of a lot of thought. Drawings were made with pencil to try out different ideas. These ideas were discussed with the author and others, and sometimes details were changed. Room had to be left in the picture area for the text, and I also had to understand which paintings would be across from each other on facing pages.

Then I would paint in watercolor, and I had to start over a few times when a picture wasn't quite right. Once or twice I would end up with two pictures for the same page, and I would ask Ms. Erickson or our advisors which one they liked best. And sometimes I still wish I had the time to do one or two of them over, because I learned so much during the process of making the paintings.

Another consideration I had to work out was how to draw the young people in this book. Some of them are children of friends of mine. For example, the little girl on the page who's taking off her shoes was drawn to look like a girl named Eva who lives in Des Moines. I also "hid" pictures of my dog, and Ms. Erickson's dog, in posters on the wall in the child's bedroom. There are a lot of fun aspects to drawing, and secret hellos to friends are a fun thing to do.

My hope for this book is that the feelings about two cultures coming to truly appreciate each other through simple acts of generosity will be inspiring to many who read this story. It was a great honor to be selected to make these paintings,

especially as there is so much reverence for art in Japanese culture. Meeting the First Lady of Iowa, Mrs. Vilsack, and learning of her strong interest in the project was another honor I experienced because Ms. Erickson inspired me to take this chance to try something new.

Great On-Line Resources



<http://www.kidlink.org/KIDPROJ/join.html>

KIDLINK participants use an assortment of email forums for the purpose of educational communication exchange among students through secondary school. Therefore, it is necessary to subscribe to certain email forums depending on the area of KIDLINK that you are interested in. These email forums are where the action is!

KIDPROJ has been set up to meet the needs of teachers and youth workers wishing to use the KIDLINK worldwide network to promote curriculum exchange between school and youth group children through secondary school. Web pages display a project, are a place for students to publish their work and are useful for classroom work, but much of the action is on the KIDPROJ mailing list, therefore, subscription is required. Kidproj student work is also published directly on the web by teachers and students themselves who are registered in Kidlink's [KidSpace](#). Students who answer the 4 Kidlink questions automatically receive a login and password for KidSpace.

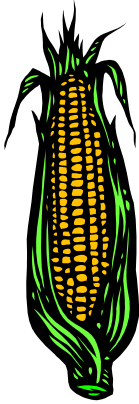
**Dreaming Beyond the Book: Dream-Makers Lessons for K-2:
One Extraordinary Fish Story.**

www.crayola.com

Enter this website and search: Japan. Crayola
Or click the 'Educator' tab and find other resources
Including lesson plans and art projects.

Education research shows that hands-on art activities aid in brain development and help children learn in other curricular areas such as reading, math, and science. Crayola® Dream-Makers® is a standards-based, teacher- and student- tested resource guide and national program. It provides classroom and art teachers' original hands-on activities that encourage students to formulate ideas, design solutions, and think for themselves.

**See: Dreaming Beyond the Book: Dream-Makers Lessons for K-2:
One Extraordinary Fish Story.**



Additional books to share with your class:

Friedman, Ina R. *How My Parents Learned to Eat*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984. (An American sailor courts a young Japanese woman and each tries, in secret, to learn the other's way of eating.)

Haskins, Jim. *Count Your Way Through Japan*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1987. (Presents the numbers one to ten in Japanese, using each number to introduce concepts about Japan and its culture.)

Iijima, Geneva Cobb. *The Way We Do It in Japan*. Albert Whitman & Co., 2002. (Gregory and his family are moving to Japan for his dad's job. After the long flight, they arrive at their new apartment. Gregory is surprised to find lots of things that are different: he needs to remove his shoes and wear slippers, he has to sit on pillows at the table, and he has to take a shower before getting into the bathtub! As Gregory's dad points out, "That's the way they do it in Japan.")

Littlefield, Holly. *Colors of Japan*. Minneapolis: Carolrhoda Books, 1997. (Explores the different colors found in Japan's history, culture, and landscape.)

Snyder, Dianne. *The Boy of the Three-Year Nap*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988. (Taro is a Japanese boy whose penchant for sleeping is the butt of village jokes, much to the chagrin of his poor widowed mother, who works hard to provide them with necessities. Taro cannot be coaxed into working, despite his mother's pleas, until he falls in love with a rich merchant's daughter and hatches a scheme to make himself wealthy.)

Takabayashi, Mari. *I Live in Tokyo: A Japanese Calendar*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001. (Have you ever been to Tokyo, Japan? Far away, in the Pacific Ocean, Tokyo is a busy city of color, activity, celebrations, super gigantic buildings, and much, much more. In this city lives a seven-year-old girl named Mimiko. Here you can follow a year's worth of fun, food, and festivities in Mimiko's life, month by month.)

Classroom Activities:

Have the children practice Japanese Origami (paper-folding) activities. For easy origami folding directions, go to <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/crafts/japan>.

Write each child's name in Japanese and let the children guess whose name it is. Let the children try to make the shapes and curves of their names. For translations go to: <http://world.altavista.com/>

Celebrate Hina Matsuri Day (The Day of the Dolls) in your classroom. Tell everyone in your class in advance to bring a doll. Have each child take turns telling about their doll and why it is special to them. (You may want to invite boys to bring stuffed animals.) You could continue the day and serve cake and tea. To find out more about Hina Matsuri Day go to: <http://wgordon.web.wesleyan.edu/dolls/american/history/hina.htm>

Play the game Janken (scissors, paper, and stone), the well-known counting game played by children in many countries, originated in Japan. To play, two players face each other and extend their right fists. As they say the words Jan and Ken they pound their fist against the palm of their hand. At the word Pon. Each forms his fist in one of three ways a closed fist represents stone, a flat hand represents paper, and two extended fingers represent scissors. Each sign has a value and determines who wins. Stone duffs scissors, so stone wins. Scissors cuts paper, so scissors wins. And paper covers stone, so paper wins. If both players make the same sign, it is a tie and the process is repeated until there is a winner.

Kindergarten - 5th Grade Reading Buddies

This book tells a part of Iowa history and could be read to the Kindergarten children by the 5th graders as a part of Iowa History.

Celebrations - Children's Day is May 5 in Japan.

Celebrate the conclusion of the kindergarten year. Learn about other celebrations for children around the world.

Friendship

Focus on friendship, classroom friends, family friends and the story of friendship that is told in this book. The Friendship Bell is a symbol of the friendship between Iowa and Japan Sister States. Other symbols of friendship could be friendship bracelets, a friendship quilt, finding an e-pal in Japan, or building a kite to fly with an older friend.



